



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

P.Oxy. 2949 - Its Transcription and Significance: A Response to Thomas Wayment'

Citation for published version:

Foster, P 2010, 'P.Oxy. 2949 - Its Transcription and Significance: A Response to Thomas Wayment', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 129, no. 1, pp. 173-176.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Journal of Biblical Literature

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Foster, P. (2010). P.Oxy. 2949 - Its Transcription and Significance: A Response to Thomas Wayment'. Journal of Biblical Literature, 129(1), 173-176

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



***P.Oxy. 2949* – Its Transcription and Significance: A Response to Thomas Wayment**

PAUL FOSTER

paul.foster@ed.ac.uk

The School of Divinity, The University of Edinburgh, EH1 2LX, UK

Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 2949 has again become a focus of scholarly attention through an article published by Prof. Thomas Wayment in the summer 2009 issue of this journal.¹ Of particular value is Wayment's application of multi-spectral imaging techniques in an attempt to illuminate more of the abraded writing on the two damaged fragments that constitute the item catalogued as *P.Oxy. 2949*. In essence this imaging technique involves taking narrow band pass images of 40 nanometres in width, under the illumination of light in the infrared region of the electromagnetic spectrum. The value of infrared lighting has long been known, though prior to the advent of digital photography and computer aided sampling the task of targeting a specific optimal wavelength of light was extremely difficult. However as Griffin has described, the use of infrared light with the enhanced sampling abilities of computerization has made the deployment of the technique much more successful.² The outcome is that the reflectivities of the different media of ink and papyrus under infrared light may result in a much clearer contrast between the background material and the abraded writing than may be the case with illumination from the visible portion of the spectrum. Consequently, Wayment's application of this technique is a welcome advance in the study of these two enigmatic fragments of text.

I. WAYMENT'S INCORRECT REPRODUCTION OF FOSTER'S TRANSCRIPTION

However, in addition to the technical aspects of his discussion, Wayment interacts with, and critiques my transcription of *P.Oxy. 2949*. That transcription formed part of a larger article testing the claims that a collection of five textual or artefactual remains provide witnesses to the text or existence of the *Gospel of Peter* at a significantly earlier date than the nine pages of this text in the now missing Akhmîm Codex (*P.Cair. 10759*).³ Without doubt *P.Oxy. 2949* is the most significant of these five potential witnesses, since it is the only fragment which shows any kind of overlap with the text contained in *P.Cair. 10759*. However, Wayment labels my transcription as minimalistic. He states specifically in regard to the transcription of line five

Of particular importance in the discussion is whether R.A. Coles's reconstruction, which includes the name *Peila/tou*, is accurately reconstructed, or whether Coles was encouraged to restore the name to create a stronger parallel with the Akhmîm text. Several other readings are called into question in Foster's minimalistic reconstruction,

¹ Thomas A. Wayment, "A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy. 2949*," *JBL* 128 (2009): 375-382.

² Carl W. Griffin, "Digital Imaging: Looking Towards the Future of Manuscript Research," *CBR* 5 (2006): 62.

³ Paul Foster, "Are There Any Early Fragments of the So-Called *Gospel of Peter*," *NTS* 52 (2006): 1-28.

as well as the text of the smaller fragment, which Coles originally placed to the bottom left of the original fragment.⁴

In particular the essence of the charge Wayment brings against me is that “Foster subsequently removed the reference to Pilate in line 5 completely”.⁵

Unfortunately Wayment’s conclusion is the result of a fundamental mistake. He has failed to reproduce my transcription accurately. He has omitted two letters and one of these is crucial, since it undermines his argument in its entirety. I do in fact transcribe the *omicron* on line 5 in the name which has probably been correctly reconstructed as *Peila/tou* by both Coles and Wayment.⁶ Moreover, Wayment also fails to reproduce the *alpha* on line 13 of my transcription, although in this case he does not base any argument on that letter. I must record that there has been a cordial email exchange with Prof. Wayment over this misrepresentation of my transcription, and in an equally cordial tone he has responded acknowledging his error, which nonetheless requires public correction. He states via email,

The omission of omicron in the first line and alpha in the final line from your published transcription are copying errors on my part as I prepared my article for publication. Both letters, however, are visible using the new images as can be confirmed in my published transcription. The new images also confirm your transcription of the smaller fragment, although the small fragment was not considered in detail in my published article.⁷

While I welcomed the forthright omission of error, apart from the misrepresentation of my transcription, it invalidates much of Wayment’s argument that I do not read any vestige of the name Pilate. Although the omicron is the only letter visible on line 5, give the occurrence of the name Pilate on line 7, I believe that it is likely that the same name is also read on line 5.

Wayment also makes reference to the smaller fragment as being, “called into question in Foster’s minimalistic reconstruction.”⁸ However in his email response he comments that, “[t]he new images also confirm your transcription of the smaller fragment.”⁹ This surely would have been worth noting in his printed article.

The further difficulty that must be raised is the conclusion that Wayment drew in an earlier email. There he states, “In the end, we really differ over the number of letters that we can see on the fragment.” This is a statement with which I agree entirely. However, in the printed conclusion in the article he writes,

the text of the *Gospel of Peter* known to the author of the Oxyrhynchus fragment may possibly derive from a patristic commentary on the text, or perhaps from an abbreviated or oral report of it, or possibly even from a patristic quotation of it. Lines 5-9 show a remarkable degree of verbal correspondence to the established text of the *Gospel of Peter*, which suggests some genetic link between *P.Oxy. 2949* and the later text of the *Gospel of Peter*.¹⁰

While I welcome Wayment’s attempt to read more of the text, and support what he states as being a difference concerning the number of letters that can be read, I remain confused as to how he quickly concludes that *P.Oxy. 2949* might be a commentary-

⁴ Wayment, “A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy. 2949*,” 375.

⁵ Wayment, “A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy. 2949*,” 378.

⁶ R.A. Coles, “2949: Fragments of an Apocryphal Gospel(?),” *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XLI* (ed. G.M. Browne; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1972), 15-16.

⁷ Email message, received from Prof. Wayment Monday 30th of November at 19:18:45 local time.

⁸ Wayment, “A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy. 2949*,” 375.

⁹ Email message, received from Prof. Wayment Monday 30th of November at 19:18:45 local time.

¹⁰ Wayment, “A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy. 2949*,” 382.

type text, which in turn is dependent on the *Gospel of Peter*. Given that *P.Oxy.* 2949 preserves a shorter and at times significantly different form of the text, it appears more likely that the tradition preserved by the papyrus fragment is earlier and represents an alternative development of a narrative that originated in the canonical gospels. By contrast, Wayment's highly innovative suggestion that *P.Oxy.* 2949 is a commentary on the *Gospel of Peter* is of course not impossible. However, given the available evidence contained in the papyrus fragment, this suggestion does not seem to have a significant degree of probability. This is because the legible portion of *P.Oxy.* 2949 does not provide any support for reading this text as a commentary. Wayment's hypothesis appears to be introduced to explain away certain very noticeable deviations between *P.Oxy.* 2949 and *P.Cair.* 10759. Furthermore, it is based on the assumption that a text of the *Gospel of Peter* was already available to a putative commentator. In turn, this assumption is then used to argue that the *Gospel of Peter* was already in existence prior to *P.Oxy.* 2949. Such circularity is not compelling.

II. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE *AD HOMINEN* NATURE OF LÜHRMANN'S ATTACK

The second troubling factual error in Wayment's article is the transmission of the accusation made by Dieter Lührmann that I had not consulted the actual manuscript of *P.Oxy.* 2949.¹¹ Lührmann bases his claim on a total misreading of a note in my original article where I thank Nick Gonis, the then curator of the Oxyrhynchus collection, and also acknowledge that my transcription was "based upon direct analysis of the papyrus fragments held in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrology Collection of the Bodleian Library in Oxford."¹² Lührmann then states that I cannot have seen the fragments since they are housed in the Sackler Library and not in the Bodleian.¹³ As I made clear in my response to Lührmann, I do not claim to have viewed the fragments in the Bodleian (in fact I viewed them in the Papyrology Room in the Sackler), but the form of words used was that suggested by one of the librarians in order to acknowledge the umbrella organization of the Oxford University Library Services. Moreover, having lived in Oxford for four years I was able to consult both *P.Oxy.* 2949 and *P.Oxy.* 4009 on a number of occasions.

It is regrettable that Wayment appears to add weight to this totally baseless accusation made by Lührmann when he writes, "Dieter Lührmann has questioned whether Foster worked with the fragment of *P.Oxy.* 2949 itself; the validity of his reconstruction must face close attention."¹⁴ First, if Wayment had consulted my response to Lührmann (of which he seems to be unaware) he may not have transmitted Lührmann's incorrect comment.¹⁵ Secondly, in his initial email correspondence Wayment stated that his intention had in fact been the opposite to that of the implied support which his written sentence appears to convey. Thirdly, however, in the follow-up statement that he has allowed me to reproduce here, he qualifies the earlier statement by noting that one of his footnotes provided less categorical support for Lührmann's assertion.

¹¹ Dieter Lührmann, "Kann es wirklich keine frühe Handschrift des Petrus-evangeliums geben? Corrigenda zu einem Aufsatz von Paul Foster," *NovT* 48 (2006): 379-383.

¹² Foster, "Are There Any Early Fragments of the So-Called *Gospel of Peter*," 62, n.17.

¹³ Lührmann, "Kann es wirklich keine frühe Handschrift des Petrus-evangeliums geben?" 381.

¹⁴ Wayment, "A Reexamination of the Text of *P.Oxy.* 2949," 376.

¹⁵ Paul Foster, "The Disputed Early Fragments of the So-Called *Gospel of Peter* – Once Again," *NovT* 49 (2007): 402-406.

As to the matter of Luhrmann's criticism of your work on P.Oxy. 2949, I stand behind my position stated in footnote 6 that Luhrmann did not respond to the salient points of your article, but rather his response has the character of an *ad hominem* attack.¹⁶

While it is gratifying that Wayment acknowledges that Lührmann's attack was unfounded, it is unfortunate that his choice of words in the body of the article seems to imply the opposite.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the importance of applying advanced multi-spectral imaging techniques to the analysis of damaged papyri. I am grateful to Wayment for his work in this area and look forward to the actual images being made available so that the evidence that informs his stated results can be assessed by all interested scholars.

¹⁶ First email message, received from Prof. Wayment.